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TAGS: [IZ](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: PM MALIKI ON AL-DARRAJI, BASRAH, ISF EQUIPPING,
AND MOH

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: In a January 19 meeting, PM Maliki agreed that senior JAM leader Abdul-Hadi al-Darraji could be held for two days while investigations into his alleged criminal activities are carried out, but asked that this agreement not be publicized. Maliki also said he would support actions taken against those attacking U.S. and UK diplomatic staff in Basrah. At the same time, he expressed continuing frustration with the Coalition's pace of arming the Iraqi Security Forces. Urging that action be taken against a senior Ministry of Health (MOH) official, he said that an overhauled MOH could be moved into a new building. END SUMMARY

The Al-Darraji Arrest

12. (S) In a January 19 meeting with PM Maliki, MNF-I Commanding General Casey acknowledged that the previous evening's arrest of senior JAM leader Abdul-Hadi al-Darraji should not have taken place without prior consultation with the GOI. At the same time, Casey and the Ambassador stressed that there was substantial evidence linking al-Darraji to illegal activities.

13. (S) Maliki agreed that al-Darraji was tied to illicit activities, adding that he had also broken with radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. Maliki said that al-Darraji could be held for two days while investigations are concluded. A decision on how to proceed could then be based on the evidence assembled against him at the end of the two days. National Security Advisor Rubaie suggested that if sufficient evidence were developed, al-Darraji could be transferred to the Iraqi criminal system for criminal prosecution.

14. (S) Maliki claimed that al-Darraji was one of 21 individuals granted immunity in 2004 by then Interim PM Allawi as a part of the cease-fire ending the battle for Najaf. Casey said that he thought only Moqtada al-Sadr had been given immunity as a part of that deal, suggesting that al-Darraji might have been granted immunity at some point in order to end violence in Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood. The Ambassador asked whether such immunity would cover criminal acts conducted after the immunity was granted. Casey said the agreement should be reviewed to determine its parameters.

15. (S) The Ambassador said now that al-Darraji has been arrested, Maliki should not call for his release; and asked Maliki to stop his advisors from publicly calling for that. Maliki agreed, but asked in return that the Coalition not

publicly reveal that he had agreed al-Darraji could be held. Maliki also said it would help him politically if MNF-I could acknowledge publicly that coordination mistakes had been made in the operation. Looking to the future, Maliki said that it would play better domestically if similar operations were conducted with just Iraqi forces.

Basrah

¶16. (S) The Ambassador said that U.S. and UK diplomatic staff were being subjected to heavy Indirect Fire (IDF) attacks in Basrah. Maliki said he would support the Coalition if it took action against those launching the attacks. He also said that he hoped we would not withdraw our personnel from Basrah because doing so would be the wrong signal to send to those instigating the violence. He said that the violence following the British withdrawal from Amarah was illustrative. He also said that before security responsibility for Basrah is transferred the 10th Iraqi Army Division will have to be completed and the division's commander replaced.

Where are Our Weapons

¶17. (S) Maliki repeated his oft-heard call for the need to increase the tempo of arming the Iraqi Security Forces. Casey said that one problem was that the number of police in some areas was above what were authorized by the Ministry of Interior. The Ambassador suggested that this issue be added to the agenda of an upcoming meeting of the Ministerial Committee on National Security, adding that MNSTC-I

Commanding General Dempsey should also be asked to attend.

Ministry of Health Issues

¶18. (S) Maliki said that an overhauled Ministry of Health (MOH) could move into a completely new building, helping to give the ministry a fresh start. He urged the Coalition to take quick action against a senior MOH official with known links to militia activity. Casey pointed out that a senior member of the MOH's Facility Protection Service was also a Coalition target.

¶19. (S) When Maliki asked for the Coalition's help with medicine, the Ambassador told him that we have medicine and equipment waiting for 148 hospitals. Citing a case near Mosul as an example, the Ambassador pointed out that medical facilities built by the Coalition are sometimes targets for terrorist attacks. The PM said local police should be given responsibility for security for these facilities. When the Ambassador told the PM that VP al-Mahdi had formed a medical-related NGO and had asked that the Coalition transfer some hospitals to it, the PM expressed his frustration, commenting that "I don't understand how this country can run on quotas."

KHALILZAD